2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AF1

this was a policy which the British neglected to pursue with any conviction, and the post-war experiment in this direction, the Malayan Union, was abandoned at the first sign of opposition. Unless a true 'Malayan citizenship' can be made effective, the ideal of a Malayan nation forming, as it were, a buffer State between China, Indonesia, and India, with bonds with all three but belonging to none, will remain a phantom.

In the present crisis the great and deplorable weakness of the Chinese in Southeast Asia is the absence of effective leadership (and the few notable exceptions to this generalization do not affect its truth). This is due in large part to the fact that there has grown up no Chinese middle class of sufficient proportions to provide disinterested, well-educated, and competent individuals in the numbers needed to guide their community through the reefs of politics towards a safe anchorage. The business leaders are so busy making money (or endeavouring not to lose it) that few of them have time to devote to public affairs even if they had the will and the knowledge. In Malaya, at least, the Indian stands in sharp contrast to the Chinese, and in Singapore Indian representation on the various bodies is vastly greater in proportion to their numbers than is the case with the much more numerous Chinese. This is not explicable solely by Chinese political pique but must be due largely to the training in politics and administration the Indians received in their own country during the British Raj. In Malaya, Indonesia, and Indochina the British, Dutch, and French have neglected to afford opportunities for the Chinese residents to acquire a knowledge of affairs. The penalty of this neglect is that now, when European control is loosening, the mass of the Chinese have few leaders to take control and to consolidate their community in face of the Communist advance. The lack of experience and education determines also the quality of the Communist leadership in these regions. Among the Malayan Communists are no Mao Tse-tungs or Chou En-lais and scarcely any individuals with more than the rudimentary mis-education obtainable in Chinese vernacular schools. The result is that the old professional bandit (always a feature of Malaya's jungle-fringe) is more prominent than he would otherwise be, and terrorism is unmitigated by constructive politics. Is it, therefore, strange that in 1949 the majority of Nanyang Chinese were 'sitting on the fence' awaiting the final upshot in China and its repercussions overseas? In such

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AFI

circumstances a handful of Chinese Communists, many of them uneducated youths with a strong professional bandit element as just mentioned, had almost complete freedom of action through the time-honoured weapons of intimidation and extortion. With this insidious pressure, and with little support or sympathy from the European Powers or the native peoples, the Chinese of Southeast Asia were indeed in a dilemma.

With the advent of militant Communism came a final complication to the lives of the overseas Chinese. The appeal of the Communists is to the idea of a society horizontally but not vertically divided—that is, divided into classes, but with a proletariat which cuts across racial and community divisions. So far this appeal had been listened to by only a small minority of the Chinese, and with the Malays and other races it had been an almost complete failure. But let no one underestimate the attraction it might have for the masses of Southeast Asia if they were simultaneously convinced of the sincerity of the Communist professions and of the bankruptcy of 'bourgeois' promises.

The only way to stem the advance of Communism in Southeast Asia is to raise the standard of living. The irony of such a course for the colonial Powers is that in promoting a rise in the standard of living they are hastening their own departure. Improved material welfare stimulates political awareness. Whereas in the grand old days of their trading companies they could lord it over a province with a garrison of a score of soldiers, to-day with armies of a hundred thousand they remain only on sufferance. It is of no use, however, their elder statesmen and administrators of a bygone age urging the Governments to 'go slow'. The idea of representative government came from the West, but the rate of approach to it is largely fixed by the peoples themselves. All that the colonial Powers can aim at is to leave their ex-dependencies able to decide their own future and not at the mercy of new imperialisms.

We take leave of the Chinese in Southeast Asia at a time when they are undergoing one of the greatest trials in their history. The whole of the Far East is disintegrating as it moves towards a new and mysterious synthesis. These emigrants belong to a race which for at least one hundred and twenty generations, through the rise, flowering, decline, and petrifaction of the Chinese culture, has preserved a unified attitude of mind towards life and reality, and they look towards their parent civilization and see it once more in